

Week Ending Friday, February 18, 2005

**Remarks at the Performance of
“Lincoln Seen and Heard”**

February 11, 2005

Thank you for that wonderful performance. Laura and I welcome you all to the White House.

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here and former members of the Cabinet who are here. I thank Senator Bill Frist for joining us as well as Congressman Mel Watt. Thank you both for coming.

I appreciate Michael Steele, the Lieutenant Governor of the great State of Maryland, for joining us. I want to thank Bruce Cole, the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I appreciate Brian Lamb joining us today, the president and CEO of C-SPAN.

I thank the U.S. Lincoln Bicentennial Commission members and the Advisory Committee for joining us today. I appreciate all the Lincoln scholars and authors who are here.

I particularly appreciate Sam Waterston and Lynn and Graham for joining us as well as Harold Holzer and Edith and Meg. Thank you all for coming.

Sam and Harold have had a good many reviews since they first took “Lincoln Seen and Heard” on the road. Perhaps the most enthusiastic review I heard came from two unimpeachable sources, Mother and Dad—[laughter]—who told how much they enjoyed the performance when they saw it in Houston. Tonight we’ve had the special honor of listening to Lincoln’s words being read in the very house where so many of them were written.

Harold Holzer has written, coauthored, or edited 23 books on Lincoln and the Civil War. He cochairs the U.S. Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and in his spare time—[laughter]—works for one of Laura’s favorite museums, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He’s an avid New York Yankee

fan who had a miserable year last year. [Laughter] He has won many awards for his work, and his latest book is, “Lincoln at Cooper Union.”

This evening I can let you all in on a secret. Tomorrow it will be announced that Allen Guelzo, who is with us tonight, and Harold Holzer are this year’s first and second place winners of the prestigious Lincoln Prize.

Congratulations.

Those of you who know Sam Waterston as “Jack McCoy” should know that America’s most famous assistant district attorney has portrayed Abraham Lincoln on stage, on television, and so I’m told, even in ballet. [Laughter] He didn’t dance. [Laughter] But he did narrate a special version of Aaron Copland’s “Lincoln Portrait” while ballet dancers performed around him. [Laughter] Sam has said, “If I have to be typecast, I’d like to be typecast as Abraham Lincoln.” I like a guy who aims high. [Laughter]

In his readings tonight, Sam noted that it was on this very day back in 1861 that Abraham Lincoln said goodbye to his home in Springfield, Illinois, never to return. Over the next 4 years, from this house, Lincoln would endure a bitter civil war that included terrible defeats as well as ringing victories; he’d sign the Emancipation Proclamation right upstairs; and he would live to see his hopes for peace and unity rewarded, before his life was taken at Ford’s Theatre on Good Friday, 1865.

The Civil War was decided on the battlefield; the larger fight for America’s soul was waged with Lincoln’s words. In his own day, Lincoln set himself squarely against a culture that held that some human beings were not intended by their Maker for freedom. And as President, he acted in the conviction that holding the Union together was the only way to hold America true to the founding promise of freedom and equality for all. And that is why, in my judgment, he was America’s greatest President.

We're familiar with the words of the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural, so eloquently read by Sam. And this performance reminds us that Lincoln wrote his words to be spoken aloud—to persuade, to challenge, and to inspire. Abraham Lincoln was a master of the English language, but his true mother tongue was liberty.

I hope that every American might have the experience we had here tonight, to hear Lincoln's words delivered with Lincoln's passion and to leave with a greater appreciation for what these words of freedom mean in our own time.

Thank you all again. Please join us at the reception. And may God continue to bless our great land.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sam Waterston, actor on NBC's television series "Law & Order," his wife, Lynn Waterston, and their son Graham Waterston; Harold Holzer, cochair, Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, his wife, Edith Holzer, and their daughter Meg Holzer; and author Allen C. Guelzo. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

February 12, 2005

Good morning. In my State of the Union Address, I discussed the need to act to strengthen and save Social Security. Since then, I have traveled to eight States and spoken with tens of thousands of you about my ideas. I have reminded you that Social Security was one of the great moral successes of the 20th century. And for those born before 1950, I have assured you that the Social Security system will not change in any way and you will receive your checks. I've also warned our younger workers that the Government has made promises it cannot pay for with the current pay-as-you-go system.

Social Security was created decades ago for a very different era. In 1950, about 16 workers paid into the system for every one person drawing benefits. Today, we have only about three workers for each beneficiary. And over the next few decades, baby boomers like me will retire, people will be

living longer, and benefits are scheduled to increase dramatically. Eventually, there will be just two workers per beneficiary. With every passing year, fewer workers will be paying ever-higher benefits to ever-larger numbers of retirees.

So here is the result: 13 years from now, in 2018, Social Security will be paying out more than it collects in payroll taxes, and every year afterward will bring a new and larger shortfall. For example, in the year 2027, the Government will somehow have to come up with an extra \$200 billion a year to keep the system afloat. By the year 2033, the annual shortfall would be more than \$300 billion a year. And by the year 2042, the entire system would be bankrupt. If we do not act now to avert that outcome, the only solutions would be dramatically higher taxes, massive new borrowing, or sudden and severe cuts in Social Security benefits or other Government programs.

To keep the promise of Social Security alive for our children and grandchildren, we need to fix the system once and for all. Fixing Social Security permanently will require a candid review of the options. In recent years, many people have offered suggestions such as limiting benefits for wealthy retirees, indexing benefits to prices instead of wages, increasing the retirement age, or changing the benefit formulas, and creating disincentives for early collection of Social Security benefits. All these ideas are on the table.

I will work with Members of Congress and listen to any good idea that does not include raising payroll taxes. But we cannot pretend that the problem does not exist. Social Security will go broke when some of our younger workers get ready to retire, and that is a fact. And if you're a younger person, you ought to be asking your elected officials, "What are you going to do about it?" Because every year we wait, the problem becomes worse for our children.

And as we fix Social Security permanently, we must make it a better deal for younger workers by allowing them to set aside part of their payroll taxes in personal retirement accounts. The accounts would be voluntary. The money would go into a conservative mix of bond and stock funds that would have the opportunity to earn a higher rate of return